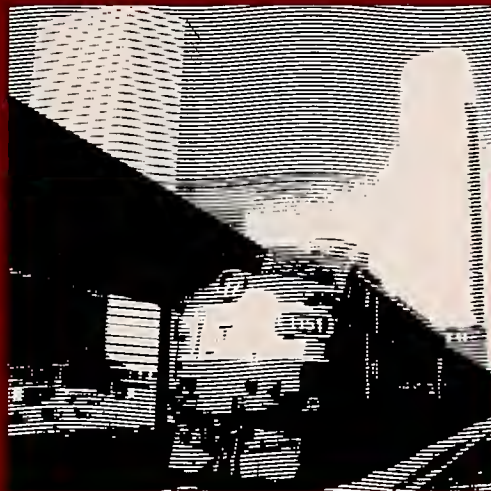
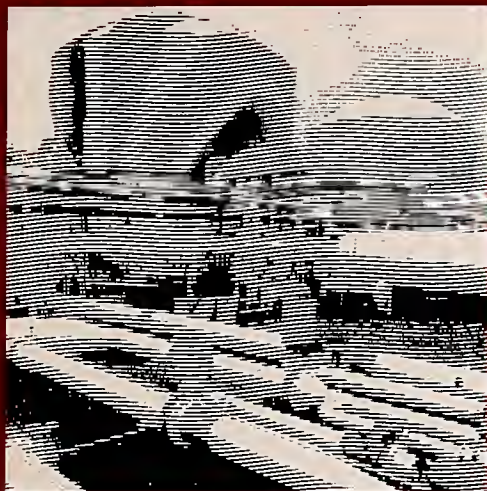


MASS.
CA20.2:
D78



**The DPU
and You**

MASS. DEPT. OF EDUC. 100 STATE ST. BOSTON, MA 02108

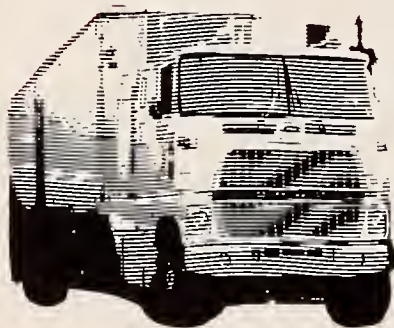
202 555

What does the *DPU* do?

The Department of Public Utilities (DPU) regulates the utilities providing electric, gas, telephone and water services, as well as rail and bus companies and commercial motor vehicles. The DPU plays a key role in guaranteeing that you, the consumer, pay fair rates for these services.

The DPU's main goals are to:

- protect consumers from unreasonable rates and terms of service;
- encourage maximum efficiency in utility company operations and management;
- ensure public safety;
- help the public deal with regulated companies;
- establish regulatory standards and apply them in a fair and consistent manner.



How does the *DPU* work?

The work of the DPU is directed by three Commissioners appointed by the Governor. They have many varied responsibilities. To provide expertise in each area of regulation, the staff works in nine divisions:

- **Consumer Division—**
consumer protection
- **Electric Power Division—**
electric utilities, fuel charge
- **Rates and Research Division—**
gas and water utilities
- **Telecommunications Division—**
intrastate telephone service and telecommunications
- **Pipeline Safety and Engineering Division—**
gas safety
- **Rail and Bus Division—**
bus regulation and rail and bus safety
- **Commercial Motor Vehicle Division—**
trucking and towing regulation and safety
- **Legal Division and Administrative Division—**
support services for the Commission and other divisions

Who will help you?

Consumer Protection

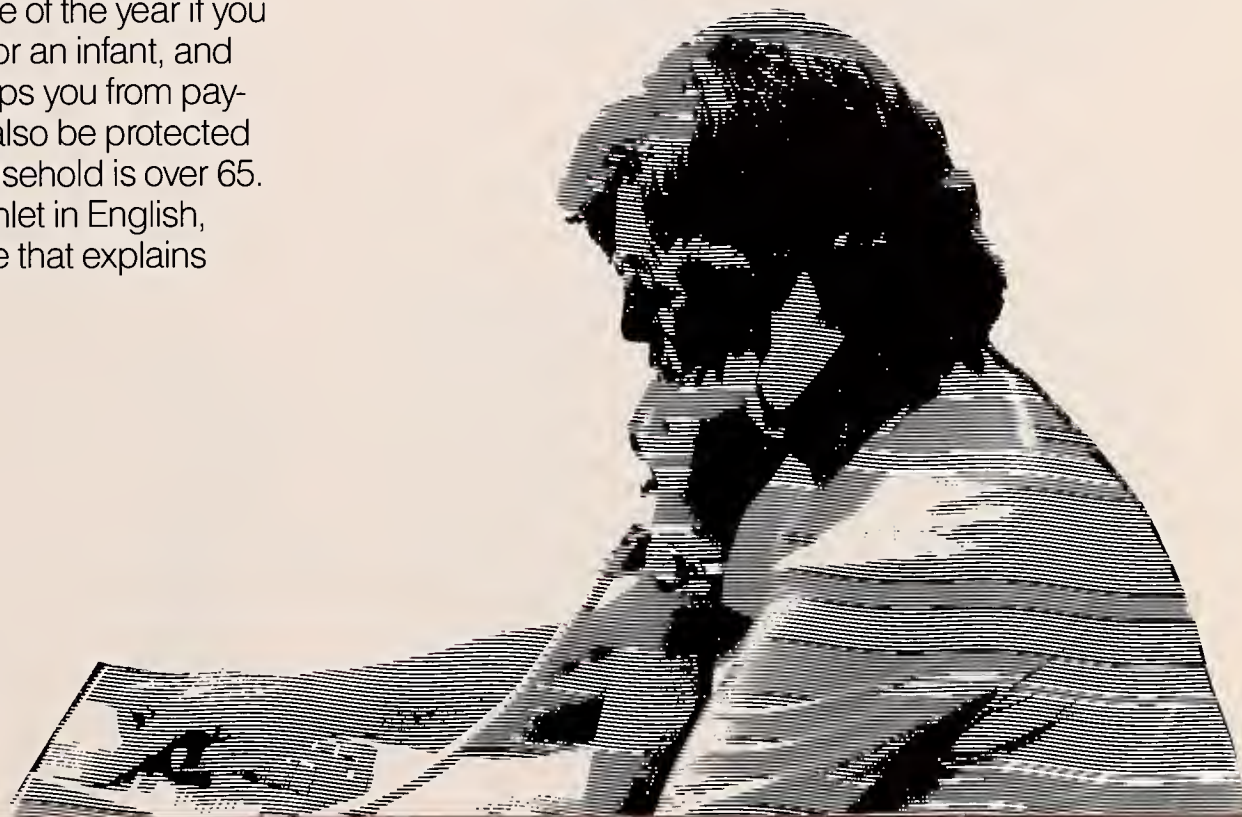
The Consumer Division protects residential consumers from unjust utility practices and helps solve problems and answer questions. If you have any problems with your bills or service shut-offs, you should first call the utility company. If you still need help, call the DPU Consumer Division at (617) 727-3531 or toll free at 1-800-392-6066, and our consumer coordinators will help you.

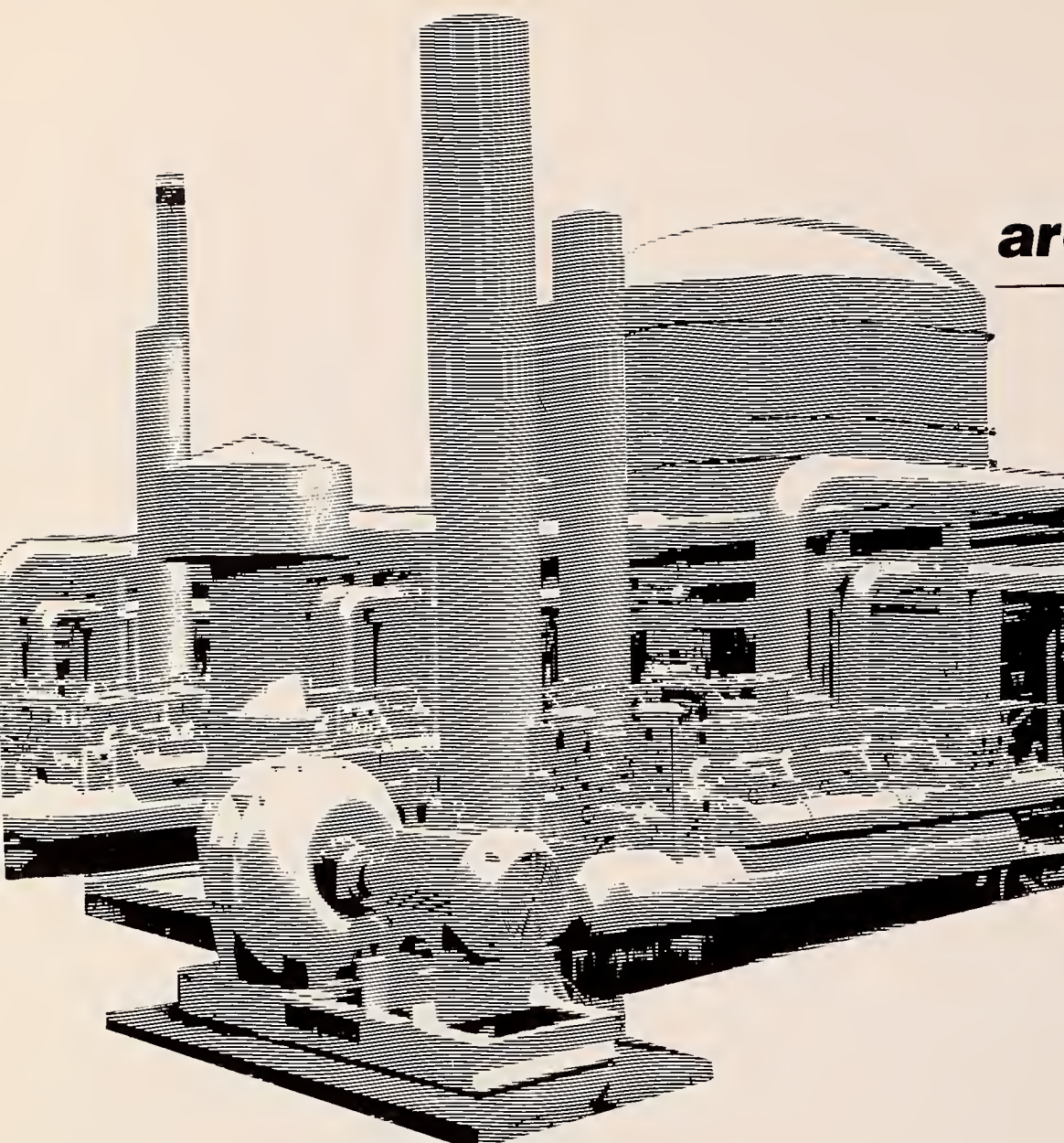
State law and DPU regulations will protect you from losing your heating service during the winter if you have financial hardship; or at any time of the year if you have a serious illness or an infant, and financial hardship keeps you from paying your bills. You will also be protected if everyone in your household is over 65. The DPU has a pamphlet in English, Spanish or Portuguese that explains your rights.

Administration and Information

The Administrative Division is a good place to find out more about the DPU. You may write, or call (617) 727-3500, for general information and may come in to look at copies of decisions, annual reports of regulated companies, continuing records of cases before the DPU, rates of regulated companies and much more.

The Administrative Division sends out notice of hearings each week to all interested parties, to city and town officials and to newspapers for publication of hearing notices. If you have questions on the time and place of hearings, or want to be on a mailing list for hearings about specific issues, the Administrative Division will help you.





How are your rates set?

Whenever gas, electric, telephone and water companies want to change their rates, they must come before the DPU for permission. The DPU may then investigate their requests and set new rate levels. The investigation may be very extensive, with many DPU staff members helping the Commission assess the company's request.

The DPU always starts its investigation by holding a public hearing in the evening in a city or town in the company's service area. The purpose is to hear public comment and gather information from customers and local and state officials. This information is very important to the Department when it evaluates company requests.

The DPU also holds hearings at its offices in Boston to hear evidence from the company and any other parties in the case. You are welcome to attend these hearings, and may testify upon request. (See the last section, *How You Can Take Part*, for information on how to participate.)



What else does the DPU do?

Telecommunications

The Telecommunications Division oversees the telephone and telecommunications companies in the Commonwealth. It reviews their rates and investigates complaints about them.

Since the breakup of AT&T in January 1984, the DPU has had to face many new issues as new companies come into Massachusetts to offer service and as older companies change their services. The Telecommunications Division is drawing up new rules relating to intra-state competition and new technologies, so that these changes will be orderly and will benefit, not harm, the consumer.

Gas Safety

Besides setting rates for gas companies, the DPU protects you from potential dangers in the production, distribution and use of natural gas and other fuel gases. DPU engineers inspect pipelines, LNG facilities and other gas plants to make sure they comply with federal and state codes and are running safely.

The DPU investigates all gas explosions or accidents to find out why they happened and to keep them from happening again. You can help us protect your safety by reporting any gas odors or leaks immediately to your local gas company or the fire department.

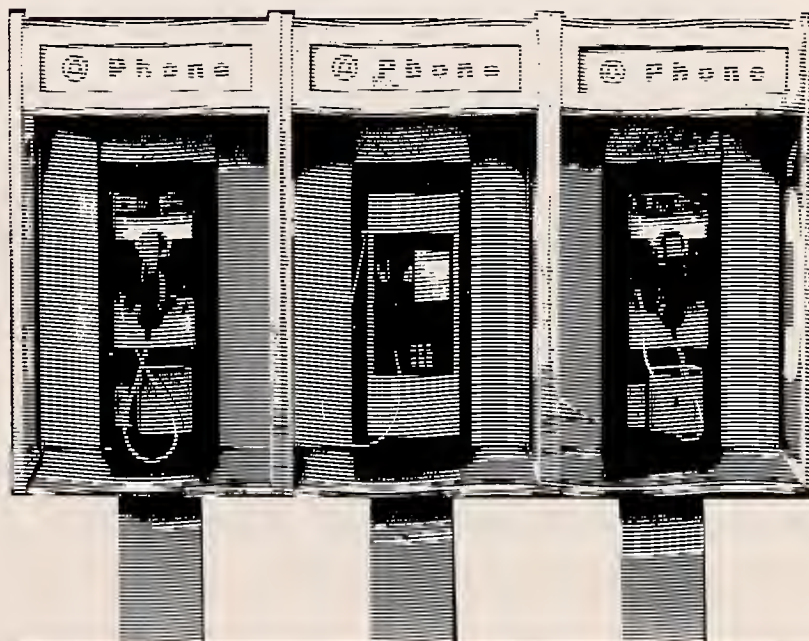
Rail and Bus

The DPU's Rail and Bus Division has the important job of ensuring your safety on railroads, rapid transit trains, streetcars and buses.

This division also certifies rail and bus companies to do business along certain routes, licenses bus drivers, oversees driver training, gives tests for bus and school bus operators, and investigates complaints and accidents involving railroads and buses.

Commercial Motor Vehicle Division

The Commercial Motor Vehicle Division certifies motor vehicle carriers that transport property for hire, including all intra-state and interstate trucking companies that do business in Massachusetts. The Division investigates complaints from customers about overcharging or poor service. You can get information about trucks, trucking companies, towing companies and rate schedules from CMVD.





How you can take part!

The Hearing Process

Many matters require formal investigations and public hearings: requests for rate increases, for financing, for approval to do business, for changes in public policy, and more. The DPU holds about 700 hearings annually.

Although some investigations are more complex, the usual procedure is:

- request is filed and investigation opened;
- public hearing held for public comment;
- evidentiary hearings held to collect more information from company representatives, the Attorney General on behalf of the public, and representatives of other groups who may be officially taking part in the case as "intervenors";
- DPU staff members analyze the information, review the issues and advise the Commission;
- Commissioners set policy, review the work of the hearing officers and staff and prepare and issue decisions and orders.

Evening Hearings For Public

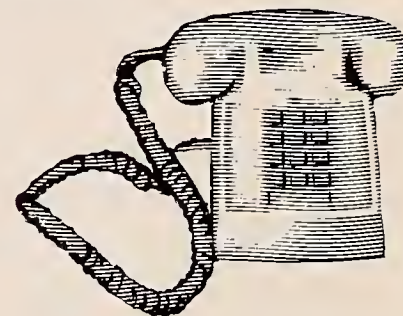
The DPU holds evening hearings on rate cases in the utility's service area to be sure your views are heard. Notice of the time and place of each public hearing is announced in newspapers and on radio and television stations in the area.

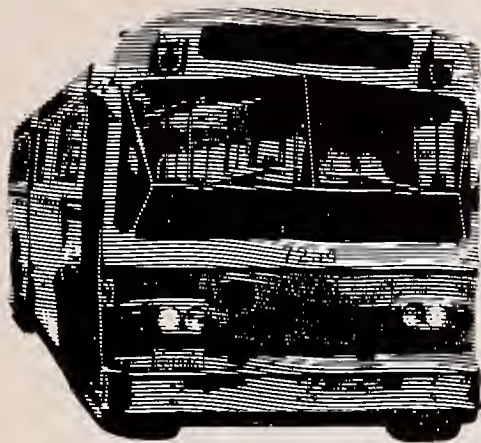
Opportunity To Be Heard

Usually, a DPU Commissioner and the attorney who will be the hearing officer in the case will be present at the public hearing to hear the concerns of customers and local and state officials. There are no restrictions on who may speak, and people are encouraged to talk about quality of service, as well as prices. All the testimony is recorded and becomes part of the total record of the case. The DPU takes special notice of what customers of the utility have to say.

Public May Testify

At the public hearing, you may testify under oath, which means that you may be questioned by Company attorneys at a later hearing, or you may give an unsworn statement. Although sworn testimony has greater legal weight, the Commission listens to everyone's opinion.





Written Comments Welcome

If you miss the evening hearing, you can send written comments to the DPU which will be included in the case record, called a "docket." You may also attend the evidentiary hearings held in Boston, but you may not question witnesses at these hearings if you are not an official intervenor.

Official Intervenors

Official intervenors are groups of concerned people, usually represented by attorneys, who file a petition at the beginning of the process asking that they be allowed to take part in the legal proceeding. Being an intervenor gives the group the right to call witnesses and cross-examine other witnesses as well as to offer written arguments and have its side fully represented throughout the entire process.

A Public Process

Although rate cases and investigations are conducted under strict laws of administrative procedure and may seem formal, there are many opportunities for the public and for public officials to be involved and be heard.

The Commissioners encourage broad participation to ensure that they hear the concerns of everyone affected and consider all such concerns in making their decisions.





The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Michael S. Dukakis
Governor

**Executive Office of Consumer Affairs
and Business Regulation**

Paula W. Gold
Secretary

Department of Public Utilities

Paul F. Levy, Chairman
Robert J. Keegan, Commissioner
Bernice K. McIntyre, Commissioner

The Department of Public Utilities

12th Floor

100 Cambridge Street

Boston, Massachusetts 02202

For information or assistance:

Administration and Information
(617) 727-3500

Consumer Division
(617) 727-3531
1-800-392-6066